



THE PHILIPPINES

Quick Facts

Population: 104,256,076 (July 2017 est.)

Area: 300,000 sq km

Ethnic Groups: Tagalog 28.1%, Cebuano 13.1%, Ilocano 9%, Bisaya/Binisaya 7.6%, Hiligaynon Ilonggo 7.5%, Bikol 6%, Waray 3.4%, other 25.3% (2000 census)

GDP (official exchange rate): \$321.2 billion (2017 est.)

Source: CIA World FactBook (Last Updated May 2018)

INTRODUCTION

Since 1972, the overwhelmingly Catholic Philippines has confronted long-running Muslim secessionist insurgencies in the Southern islands of Mindanao and in the Sulu archipelago. A combination of endemic corruption, failing state institutions, socio-cultural marginalization, crippling poverty, and low levels of human development have fueled Muslim demands for an independent homeland. Yet the three primary groups engaged in insurgent activity in support of separation were themselves divided along tribal and ideological lines.

Since 2004, the United States has deployed some five hundred Special Forces personnel to the southern Philippines to provide intelligence support and training; but over the years the number was reduced to just above one hundred Special Forces personnel as domestic security agencies managed to neutralize key terrorist leaders and rein in various jihadist groups and insurgencies. Nonetheless, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) are hobbled by corruption, limited by outdated equipment, and often stretched too thin. The AFP found themselves on better footing following the peace process with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in 2014 but still faces ongoing threats from other insurgent and radical groups. Since 2015, the AFP have confronted Islamic State (IS) infiltration into Mindanao, as various local jihadist groups pledged allegiance (bayah) to and received assistance as well as ideological inspiration from the Middle East-based transnational terrorist group. Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's almost single-minded focus on a controversial and bloody campaign against illegal drugs has largely distracted him from the growing threat in the south and overstretched the finite resources of the country's security and intelligence community. As a result, the Philippines is increasingly seen as the weak link in Southeast Asia, and a potential site for the establishment of an IS wilayat (state).

ISLAMIST ACTIVITY

The Philippines lacks any truly broad-based Islamic movements. The Muslim Brotherhood is not strongly represented in the country, nor does the Philippines have any large Muslim civil society organizations, such as Indonesia's Nahdlatul Ulama or Muhammadiyah. There are three main organizations capable—

to various degrees—of engaging in religious-inspired violence in the Philippines: The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG). Each of these insurgent groups is riddled with factionalism, leadership contests, and disputes over tactics. Moreover, there is no Muslim or Islamist political party at the national level. Although the MNLF ostensibly acts like a political party and will contest elections in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), it is weak and factionalized. Since 2006, it has not governed the ARMM. In the past two years, however, new elements such as the Maute Group have arisen. The Maute group, also known as the Islamic State of Lanao (ISL), has transformed from a diminutive family militia into a full-fledged terrorist organization and led the siege of Marawi under the flag of IS.

Moro National Liberation Front

Misuari, a Manila-based Muslim academic, founded the MNLF in the early 1970s, and for the next decade it served as the sole revolutionary organization for the indigenous Muslim population, known as the Moros. The MNLF was an ethno-nationalist movement and was predominantly secular, although it included Islamist elements. The group received considerable material and financial support from Libyan leader Col. Muammar Qadhafi, whose Green Book espoused leftist Muslim anti-colonialism.¹ The MNLF was closely allied with the communist New People's Army, which launched its own insurgency at the same time, prompting a declaration of martial law and the country's subsequent deterioration.

In 1976, Qadhafi attempted to broker a peace agreement, but the government showed little interest in implementing the proposed autonomy deal. After the failed talks, the MNLF became internally divided and suffered significant battlefield losses to the AFP. It never posed a serious military threat to the Republic of the Philippines again. In 1996, the MNLF and the government signed the Tripoli Accords, which established the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).² Nur Misuari became the governor of the region, which included only five provinces; the other eligible provinces failed to pass plebiscites. Some two thousand MNLF combatants were integrated into the AFP and the national police.³ The ARMM agreement was never fully implemented, and the region never achieved the promised political and economic autonomy. Rampant corruption and inept leadership also hobbled the ARMM, and these problems remain prevalent to this day.

The MNLF remains deeply factionalized and largely ignores the fact that the political aspirations of the Moro have diversified considerably. The causes that inspired MNLF's formation remain the rallying call of the group, but greater political engagement among the Moros and a greater willingness to discuss Moro grievances by the government has slowly eroded MNLF's relevance. Among Moro extremist groups, it can be said that the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) holds greater influence than MNLF today. Elements of the MNLF occupied parts of Zamboanga City in 2013 in an effort to derail a peace process between the Philippine government and MILF. Approximately 200 MNLF members fought AFP units, forcing the city to cease commerce, government services, transportation systems, and schools until the attack stopped. Since that time, MNLF has waded in and out of the peace process.

MNLF's supporters primarily come from the Tausig population in the Sulu area. MNLF's more concentrated support in the Sulu area brought the group into direct dispute with members of Abu Sayyaf (ASG). Specifically, ASG's kidnapping and banditry throughout the area drew attention from AFP forces that in turn created tensions with the local population and undercut MNLF's political operations. Following the election to the national presidency of Rodrigo Duterte in 2016, his administration has signaled its willingness to sit down with MNLF to discuss sources of the ongoing dispute. Concerns have been expressed throughout Mindanao that President Duterte's willingness to hold separate talks with the MNLF may lead to an intensification of the conflict.⁴

Moro Islamic Liberation Front

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) is the largest armed Islamist organization in the country. Salamat Hashim, a Muslim scholar educated at Egypt's Al-Azhar University, broke away from the MNLF in 1978 and formally founded the MILF in 1984, basing its headquarters in the Jamaat-e-Islami's compound in Lahore, Pakistan. The MILF saw itself as part of the global jihad, inspired by the influence of the mujahideen in Afghanistan.⁵ From the start, the MILF was far more Islamist than the secular, ethno-nationalist MNLF, and its avowed goal was to establish an Islamic homeland for the Moros.⁶ The MILF began as a small group whose growth and popularity caught Philippine forces by surprise. The MILF rejected the 1996 MNLF-government peace pact that established the ARMM and benefited from mass defections from MNLF ranks as a result of that agreement.⁷ By 1999, the MILF had over 11,000 men under arms and controlled vast swaths of central Mindanao. Yet it was never able to broaden that base of support throughout the Sulu archipelago, where the ethnic Tausig-dominated MNLF remained strong.

Starting in 1996, members of the nascent terrorist organization and regional al-Qaeda affiliate, Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), began to conduct training for their members and MILF combatants in MILF camps.⁸ Al-Qaeda-affiliated individuals have long been rumored to assist JI with financing and operational assistance, but JI never became fully affiliated with al-Qaeda.⁹ However, in 1997 the MILF and the Philippine government under President Fidel Ramos, who had just concluded an autonomy agreement with the MNLF the previous year, began formal peace talks. The 2000 election of President Joseph Estrada, however, led the government to revert to a hardline stance. Estrada ordered the country's military to resume operations against the group, culminating in the capture of the MILF's main base camp. Peace talks resumed in 2001, following Estrada's ouster via a popular uprising. His successor, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, resumed peace talks with the MILF in 2002. Nonetheless, in 2003 peace talks broke down and wide-scale fighting erupted, with Philippine military personnel seizing several large MILF camps.

Since the mid-2003 death of Salamat Hashim, the MILF has been led by Chairman Ebrahim Murad and Vice Chairman Aleem Abdulaziz Mimbintas. Murad has de facto accepted a broader autonomy agreement, cognizant that the MILF could not win an independent homeland on the battlefield. Formal talks over autonomy began in 2003, and in November 2007 a draft autonomy agreement over the MILF's ancestral domain was finally concluded.¹⁰ Nonetheless, Christian lawmakers in Mindanao, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), and hardline members of the cabinet rejected the agreement in December 2007. The country's supreme court found it to be unconstitutional in August 2008.¹¹ As a result, widespread fighting resumed. Although President Arroyo pledged to restart talks, formal talks did not resume before her term ended in May 2010. The breakdown of talks led to renewed fighting by the MILF and attacks on Christian villages in 2008–09, which left 400 dead and thousands displaced. The stalled peace process also saw the withdrawal of the small Malaysian-led contingent of peace monitors at the end of 2009. Formal talks faltered in 2010, as President Arroyo completed her lame-duck term in office.

In February 2011, as the administration of President Benigno S. Aquino III prepared to resume formal negotiations with the MILF, the group saw its strategic options and financial resources shrink. A hardline commander left the MILF and vowed to resume offensive military operations.¹² The MILF previously was known to receive funding from Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf sources, although the scope of this aid is not publicly known. Much of money received from outside sources is thought to have dried up, with the group forced to look towards alternative sources of income from within the Philippine economy. To supplement its funds, the MILF engaged in criminality, such as extortion and a limited amount of kidnapping, as well as the production of marijuana.

In part because of these difficulties, MILF's leadership proved to be open to negotiations with the Philippine government under President Aquino. He used the MILF's weaknesses and growing public demand for a cessation of hostilities to successfully build consensus on both sides for a political settlement in 2012. The negotiated pact called for the creation of a semi-autonomous region called Bangsamoro that

would have greater political and economic separation from Manila, thus alleviating Moro fears about domination by the Christian north, but remain a part of the Republic of the Philippines.¹³ Bangsamoro would replace the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao as the political unit covering the southern island, and international aid organizations and development groups would be allowed to begin economic development.¹⁴

Yet, like prior “breakthroughs” in negotiations between the disputing parties, discussions broke down in the summer of 2013. MILF representatives feared delay by government negotiators was due to preparation of amendments to the initial pact, while the Philippine government became apprehensive that the Moro population would push for greater autonomy than initially agreed upon without necessary protections being worked in. The peace has held for the past several years, though tensions on both sides remain high. The election of Duterte has thus far been seen by many of the leaders in MILF as a positive development, because the new president is seen as being far more flexible in the pursuit of peace than his predecessor. The establishment of a tentative peace has allowed MILF segments to focus on internal issues that in turn have increased factionalism throughout the group’s ranks and even led to incidents of violence.¹⁵

The MILF remains the country’s largest Muslim group, strongly represented among the Maguindanao and Maranao ethnic groups, though it has little following among Tausigs. The past decade has seen a weakening of the MILF relative to its peak strength in 1999–2000.

The MILF works very closely with Islamic clergy across Mindanao and has deputized many to serve as Islamic judges in the shadow government that the MILF runs in the territory under its control. The MILF is the leading voice for the Maranao and Maguindanao tribes, as well as a handful of smaller tribes such as the Yaccans on Basilan Island. The MILF has very little support among the Tausigs in Sulu or Tawi Tawi. It controls significant territory in Lanao del Sur, Cotabato, Maguindanao, Sultan Kudarat, Sharif Kabungsan, and Sarangani provinces, as well as territory in provinces in other parts of the southern Philippines.

Despite all this, the MILF should be in a much stronger position than it is currently. In the areas it controls, the group provides little in the way of social services. It has some madrassas and a small medical corps but is not able to match—or compete with—the resources marshaled by the Philippine state. In some ways, the MILF actually alienates the very community it seeks to represent. The MILF is a largely horizontal organization, and individual base commanders often compete over turf, that is, which villages they can tax. There is also growing concern about the peace process; while most Muslims in the region rejoiced over the agreed pact in late 2012, the government has dragged its feet in finalizing all the points, and MILF commanders have become increasingly anxious to resume combat operations.

There are hard-core elements of the MILF who have never accepted the peace process and took action to discredit the moderate leadership of MILF chairman Ebrahim el Haj Murad. In July 2010, one of the most conservative religious commanders, Ustadz Ameril Umbra Kato, quit the organization and has subsequently attracted the organization’s more radical youth, unhappy with the stalled peace process, away from the fold.¹⁶ The longer the peace process drags on, the more likely that the hardliners will feel vindicated. The MILF claims to be 12,000 to 15,000 members in size,¹⁷ although circumstantial evidence suggests the organization is significantly smaller and weaker today.

The Mamasapano massacre in January 2015—when MILF members killed 44 members of Philippine police’s Special Action Force (SAF)—torpedoed peace negotiations. The encounter took place after Filipino Special Forces tried to capture Marwan, a Malaysian bomb-maker, who took refuge in an area controlled by the MILF. The Malaysian terrorist was aided and sheltered by the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), a splinter faction of the MILF, which has enjoyed some degree of sympathy and cooperation from more hardline elements of its mother organization. Following the incident, there was an immediate collapse in public and legislative support for the passage of the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL), the legal framework for the establishment of a Muslim-led sub-state entity. The upshot was

a years-long deadlock in peace negotiations. The protracted peace process similarly has weakened the MILF's battlefield preparedness, driving some of its more hardline rank-and-file to join jihadist-extremist groups such as the Maute Group.¹⁸

Abu Sayyaf

The third Islamist organization active in the Philippines is the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), which vacillates between terrorism and criminality. The ASG was founded in 1991 by a veteran of the Afghan mujahideen, Abdurrajak Janjalani, apparently with seed money from al-Qaeda.¹⁹ Concomitantly, Osama bin Laden's brother-in-law, Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, moved from Quetta, Pakistan—where he ran a branch of the Rabitat (Muslim World League)—to the Philippines.²⁰ From 1991 to late 1994, he ran branches of two Saudi charities, the Muslim World League and the Islamic International Relief Organization, in Mindanao and Sulu—organizations that Philippine security forces saw as conduits of aid for the various Moro secessionist organizations.

From 1991 to 1995, the Abu Sayyaf, which was mainly comprised of ethnic Tausig defectors from the larger and more secular Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), carried out a spate of bombings, assassinations, and kidnappings against religious targets, including churches and Christian missionaries in Sulu province. Following a loss of support from al-Qaeda in 1995, the group degenerated and became synonymous with bold kidnapping attacks, such as the April 2000 raid on the Malaysian island of Sipidan and the May 2001 assault on the Philippine resort island of Palawan. Together, these attacks netted the group some 50 foreigners, which it proceeded to hold for ransom.

Between 2000 and 2001, the ASG took some 140 hostages, including schoolchildren, teachers, priests, and western tourists, and was responsible for the death of 16 of these captives. Starting in 2003, the ASG all but ceased kidnapping and—in conjunction with members of the Indonesian-based JI—resumed a campaign of terrorist attacks, including the bombing of a ferry in February 2004 that killed 116 people. Between 2004 and 2007, the few kidnappings that the group did perpetrate resulted in executions, not ransoms. The shift had much to do with the consolidation of power carried out in 2003 by Khadaffy Janjalani, the younger brother of the organization's founder, who sought to return the group to its secessionist roots, as well as with the neutralization of several other leaders following the onset of U.S. training and assistance to the Philippine military in early 2002.

By early 2005, several top JI leaders were known to be in Jolo, protected by the ASG. An August 2006 campaign by the AFP, supported by a contingent of U.S. Special Forces troops who provided training and intelligence, led to a sustained offensive against the ASG through mid-2007. In September 2006 and March 2007, respectively, Khadaffy Janjalani and Abu Solaiman were killed. Both were key leaders in the organization. The ASG was weakened as a result, and from 2007 through 2010 returned to kidnapping schemes.²¹

The current leadership of the ASG is more fragmented than in previous eras. Isnilon Totoni Hapilon, the group's hardline commander on Basilan, remains a prominent leader. The size of the ASG is estimated to be between three hundred and four hundred fighters at any given time. However, it is often supported and bolstered by disaffected MNLF combatants and gains members who have been radicalized elsewhere.²² The ASG has increased kidnapping since 2007 and has frequently beheaded individuals for whom ransom is not paid.²³ Maritime attacks on private vessels near Sulu province have also become a common form of violence. Nonetheless, the ASG targets U.S. forces when possible, as they did in the October 2009 IED attack in Jolo that killed two U.S. Special Forces soldiers. Abu Sayyaf's forces and leadership remain primary targets of AFP and U.S. forces but remain at large by successfully avoiding raids. Hapilon made global headlines when he publicly issued a statement in August 2014 swearing allegiance to ISIS and, in turn, was recognized as ISIS's designated leader in the Philippines in early 2016 with the new name of Sheik Mujahid Abu Abdullah al-Filipini. The areas where ASG operates have become one of several

hotspots in Southeast Asia for targeted ISIS recruitment.²⁴ There is ample speculation regarding how closely tied ASG and ISIS are, but the existence of ties at all is a troublesome development for the AFP.²⁵

ASG has social support within the Philippines, but it is not particularly strong. In the Sulu archipelago, and in particular Jolo Island, there is support for the group—albeit for no other reason than that it is a closely-knit society based on clan and kinship. The group itself is not wildly popular, nor does it have a positive message or social agenda. It is vehemently anti-Christian, anti-state, and anti-American. It relies on kidnappings for much of its funding. Almost all kidnapping victims are individuals who appear to be Christian. On the few occasions that the ASG has kidnapped Muslims, it has tended to execute them because they were working on U.S.-funded projects. When the ASG receives foreign funds, kidnapping ceases and bombings resume. This cyclical pattern limits the group's appeal to only a small segment of ethnic Tausig society. By and large, the ASG is rejected by both Muslims and Christians because of its conduct, but clan-based loyalties and kinship ties sustain it. To date no authoritative polling has been done to quantify the level of support the ASG enjoys, either in the Sulu archipelago or in the Philippines at large.

ISLAMISM AND SOCIETY

Islam came to the Philippines via Yemeni traders who spread the religion throughout the Malay and Indonesian archipelagos beginning in the fourteenth century. Spanish colonization led to brutal clashes, and the Muslims—known as Moros, a derivation of the Spanish word Moors—took great pride in their resistance to colonial domination. When the Philippines became an American colony, the Moros continued their fight for independence, and only after U.S. military intervention was the southern Philippines pacified.

At the end of World War II, when the United States was preparing for Philippine independence, Moro leaders requested that the United States give them their own independent homeland. The United States, however, never acknowledged this request, and the Muslim region was incorporated into the Republic of the Philippines. Decades of Christian migration fundamentally altered the ethnic balance of the area, and in vast swaths of the region, Muslims became the minority. By almost every measure of human development, however, the Muslim region lags behind the rest of the country. Today, the Philippines is 82.9 percent Catholic, 5 percent Muslim, and 2.1 percent Evangelical Christian.²⁶

One of the most interesting trends in the Philippines is the spread of Balik Islam—literally, “return to Islam.” Balik Islam is a movement of Christian converts to Islam, which remains the fastest growing religion in the Philippines. Conversion takes place through two general processes. One is the conversion of workers while overseas in the Middle East,²⁷ often for financial reasons (since being a Muslim can lead to better job opportunities). The other, which takes place in the Philippines, is via the network of Balik Islam centers scattered throughout the archipelago, primarily in slum areas of cities. For instance, of the 1,890 madrassas in the Philippines, only 1,000 or so are in Mindanao; the remainders are spread across the rest of the country. The center of Balik Islam is in the northern city of Baguio, on Luzon Island. Much of the funding for Balik Islam's dawa work comes from the Gulf.²⁸ Balik Islam preaches a Salafi interpretation of Islam and encourages its members to live in exclusive parallel communities.²⁹ A radical fringe of Balik Islam, the Rajah Solaiman Movement, has worked closely with the ASG and been implicated in a number of terrorist acts.

There are two major organizations that lead the Balik Islam movement: the Islamic Studies Call and Guidance (ISCAG) and Islamic Wisdom Worldwide Mission (IWWM). Both have been substantially funded by Middle East and Gulf sources. The IWWM is the successor organization of a front foundation used by Osama bin Laden's brother-in-law, Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, who was forced out of the Philippines in late 2004.³⁰ The organization was thought to have been used in the planned terrorist operations of Ramzi Yousef and his uncle Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. ISCAG was established in the mid-1990s in Saudi Arabia by a group of primarily Balik Islam converts. ISCAG is a rapidly growing NGO and has been featured in the press due to its rapid expansion of operations and sponsorship of mosque

and madrasa construction. The organization has come under more scrutiny by state authorities after its original head, Humoud Mohammad Abdulaziz al-Lahim, was forced out of the Philippines in April 2002 on allegations of sponsoring terrorism. ISCAG remains a focus of the state's investigative agents based on suspicion of ties to violent extremism.

ISLAMISM AND THE STATE

The Philippine government has a mixed history with its Muslim citizens. There is ample suspicion of the Muslim minority by the Catholic majority, which has translated into structural discrimination within the national economy. Yet the emergence of a powerful Moro identity that in turn inspired more intense legitimate political advocacy and violent extremism has encouraged the state to pay closer attention to Moro concerns. The details of the 2014 agreement signed between the government and the MILF included guarantees of greater political access and stronger political autonomy. Islamic courts for family law are active in the country's south. Mosque and madrasa construction generally proceed unhindered. Overall, Islam is the fastest growing religion in the country, and as mentioned above, the Balik Islam movement is robust.

This has led to extensive contacts between the Philippines and the broader Muslim world. The country has observer status in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, or OIC (formerly the Organization of the Islamic Conference); has increased the number of pilgrims it sends on the hajj to Saudi Arabia; and has allowed foreign aid organizations, dawa organizations, and Islamist charities to have access to the country.³¹ The presidential administration in Manila likewise has an office of Muslim affairs, and Muslims are increasingly making political inroads as candidates beyond the southern provinces.

Muslims in Mindanao and Sulu have been angered at the loss of ancestral domain to Christian migration, heavy-handed government responses to Muslim secessionist movements, and the slow implementation of promises by the government as part of various peace pacts. There is also concern that the government's extensive counterterrorism cooperation with the United States since 9/11 has hardened government elements against any type of compromise with Moro groups. This is again where the election of Rodrigo Duterte may prove significant. Duterte hails from Mindanao, and his primary base of support is concentrated there. Despite Duterte's reputation as a political wildcard, the Philippine population as a whole has found the start of his administration to be a success. His populist persona and a desire for quick government action has created concerns over the status of rule of law in Philippines.

The administration's anti-drug campaign remains popular with the broader public, but legal groups, opposition parties, and human rights organizations are growing concerned. Duterte's populism also is also popular among the Moro population. The hope in the south is that, as a local and as a politician less interested in appearances, Duterte will push forward the peace process to greater stability.

The peace agreement between MILF and the government enjoys some support throughout the country, especially among moderate Muslims in the south. The agreement has continued to largely dissuade MILF elements from engaging in conflict, while joint operations with the United States and improved operational capability have isolated Abu Sayyaf. The government's footing has gradually improved over the past decade as it has used security assets in a more efficient manner, diversified the socio-economic tools used to assist development in the south, and used political dialogue to ease tensions with groups willing to negotiate. Insecurity will continue to define portions of the Philippines, and terrorism, especially by ASG, will be a focus of AFP, but the state's positive steps over the past decade or so can be expected to deliver continued benefits to the entire country.

Nevertheless, the Philippine state now faces an insurgent challenge from the Islamic State (IS). In May 2017, IS-affiliated groups began a months-long siege on Marawi, the country's largest Muslim-majority city. The siege underlined the growing threat posed by not only local and regional jihadist groups, but also global terrorist organizations such as IS. Under President Duterte, the Philippines confronts the prospect

of an IS wilayat (state) in the president's home island of Mindanao. IS command provided direct support to the jihadist groups that laid siege on Marawi.³²

This support reflects three interrelated factors: first, IS's strategic reorientation amid growing military setbacks in the caliphate's heartland in western Iraq and eastern Syria, which has resulted in the IS leadership aiding their global supporters to conduct spectacular terrorist attacks or establish offshoots around the world;³³ second, the deadlock in peace negotiations between the Philippine government and the MILF in light of the Mamasapano massacre; and third, Duterte's neglect of the peace process with moderate Muslim rebels in favor of peace negotiations with communist rebels and, crucially, his obsessive focus on the war on drugs.³⁴

In response, the Philippine government has sought assistance from neighbors such as Indonesia and Malaysia, with a focus on intelligence-sharing and joint patrols in their porous borders in Sulu and Celebes Seas. Traditional allies such as the United States and Australia have provided intelligence, weapons, and logistical support. China, a comparatively new strategic partner, has offered intelligence and equipment. Despite Duterte's anti-American tirades, he has accepted assistance from the Pentagon, which deployed American Special Forces to assist the AFP, which has been embroiled in a months-long battle to liberate Marawi and allow the hundreds of thousands of refugees outside the city to return home.³⁵ The conundrum has compelled the Duterte administration to revive peace negotiations with the MILF by advocating a revised Bangsamoro Basic Law that is more amenable to the Philippine public. The Philippine legislature must pass the proposal into law, which it will likely not do without public support. To contain a potential terror contagion, Duterte also declared a months-long martial law across the whole island of Mindanao, raising concerns over violations of human rights and civil liberties of residents in affected areas. Post-Marawi reconstruction and containment of the IS threat in Mindanao will be an uphill battle, requiring sustained cooperation with and assistance from regional and international partners.

ENDNOTES

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9. Preeti Bhattacharji, "Terrorism Havens: Philippines," Council on Foreign Relations, June 1, 2009, <https://www.cfr.org/background/terrorism-havens-philippines>.

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14. See the World Bank’s plans for FASTRAC (Facility for Advisory Support for Transition Capacities) in the Philippines: “Moro Islamic Liberation Front, United Nations and World Bank Launch Advisory Facility to Support Peace Process in Southern Philippines,” The World Bank, April 29, 2013, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2013/04/29/moro-islamic-liberation-front-united-nations-and-world-bank-launch-advisory-facility-to-support-peace-process-in-southern-philippines>.
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